

SECRET

OXC-2618  
Copy 5 of 6

13 November 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR : Chief, Development Branch, Development Projects Division  
SUBJECT : Status of Concrete Runway at OXCART [REDACTED]  
REFERENCE : Memo from [REDACTED] to C/DPD/DB, Dated 23 October 1961;  
Subject: "Design Safety Factor for [REDACTED] Runway" (OXC-2489)

1. I have read with interest [REDACTED] analysis of the runway situation at the [REDACTED] and while I would agree that if in the last analysis we must increase the length of the bloody thing that we should do it sooner rather than later, I believe that to do it now might well be premature. Colonel Beerli shares this view, and additionally the weather, after first freeze, will prevent us from taking positive action until the spring.

2. My understanding is that at least in the testing of the J-75 version, and presumably even during a portion of the testing on the fully qualified engine, reduced vehicle loads will compensate for the increase in design weight. Then too in the operational phase, actual missions, I believe, are scheduled for launch in the night hours when the ambient temperature is well within reason. The only time you could really come close to violating the minimum safety factor would be in a maximum gross weight take-off under high ambient temperatures. Perhaps that will be the day when we do not attempt to fly unless we plan to sacrifice a portion of the lake bed in the manner [REDACTED] has suggested.

3. As you know, runway length is always a compromise between a number of factors including gross take-off weight, thrust available, field elevation, ambient temperature, and the like. I certainly think that we should keep close watch on the gradual vehicle weight increase because if we do not, one of these days  $V_2$  will be out beyond the end of the runway, and then we are in trouble. You are also aware that Kelly is very sensitive about people telling him that his head is up and looked on a matter of this sort. I would suggest that we quietly ask [REDACTED] to have [REDACTED] give us a cost estimate on

OXO-2618

Page 2

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the order suggested by [REDACTED], but that we do it quietly or [REDACTED] will hear about it and then we will be in for the usual blast from Kelly Johnson. I seem to remember that [REDACTED] once told me that if we added on to the present runway, we should figure on no less than [REDACTED]. In view of the fact that I believe the extension would have to be at the southeast end, it might be a good idea if we got the estimate and attempted to resolve the question before we installed the runway lighting system. I also wish that you note the fact that any extension to the southeast end would mean that the aircraft readiness pad would end up being somewhere other than at the end of the runway. Colonel Beerli is in agreement with my suggestion above, and I suggest that perhaps you may wish to telephone this request for an estimate to [REDACTED] shortly so that he will be in a position to bring it in with him when he arrives 17 November.

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JAMES A. CUNNINGHAM, JR.  
Assistant Chief  
DPD-DD/P

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